

Socialist Worker

Monthly Review

#1 • October 2002 • \$2

RESISTING WAR and GLOBALISATION

the left responds



**Public-private
partnerships**

**Workers' rising
confidence**

**The economics
of war**

Why we launched Socialist Worker Monthly Review

Welcome to the first issue of *Socialist Worker Monthly Review* (SWMR).

SWMR replaces the (mostly) bi-weekly *Socialist Worker* newspaper, which had been published since 1995.

Why the change?

Times are changing, and changing fast. Although it doesn't always feel like it, the world and Aotearoa are, politically, very different from the way they were in 1995, or even in 2000.

At the end of 1999 the "Battle of Seattle", where 40,000 trade unionists, environmentalists and human rights activists protested against the World Trade Organisation, highlighted the rise of a global resistance to capitalist globalisation.

The movement has been growing ever since. As the recent protests outside the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in South Africa (pictured on the front cover) this is a truly global movement.

Then, a year ago, the atrocities of September 11 gave George Bush the pretext he needed to launch his "war without end", clearly demonstrating what some activists have termed "armed globalisation".

Resistance to corporate power is weaker in Aotearoa than elsewhere, but it is here nonetheless.

From the GE-free and anti-war movements, to the teachers' strikes and school students' rebellion, more people are getting involved in the fight for a better world.

More people are interested in socialist ideas because they want to understand why we live in a world governed by profit and war, and they want ideas about what they can do to change it.

Sales of the old *Socialist Worker* news-

paper were rising in many areas, despite this we were still only reaching hundreds. And that is not enough.

Socialist Workers' agitational leaflets are putting revolutionary ideas in the hands of thousands. So we decided to focus on leaflets as our main way of reaching out to working class people.

We found that our leaflets began to conflict with our paper, which was trying to do the same job of agitating around the issues of the day.

At the same time, trying to make sense of our rapidly changing world was forcing us to change the nature of our paper. For example, our writers felt the need to do more research and write longer articles.

Socialist Worker Monthly Review is our attempt to find a solution to these problems.

We hope that it will provide socialists, militant workers, anti-capitalists and other activists with the in-depth analysis, debates, history and reviews that they want.

At only 20-pages, it isn't a big magazine — as you can see, our enthusiastic writers have filled this one up, leaving no room for the international news we planned to carry.

In future issues we'd also like to see many more letters, reports and reviews from our readers.

We hope too, that our readers will do more than just read, and that SWMR will, in combination with Socialist Worker leaflets, help to build a network of socialist activists dedicated to fighting for a better world.

DAVID COLYER
editor

What's on

AUCKLAND

• **Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-Bomb Exhibition.** A collection of photographs and artefacts that depict the consequences of the bombings from 1945 through to the international peace initiatives of today. Entry free. To 17 October, Aotea Centre, BNZ Foyer, 9am-5pm daily.

• **In A Land of Plenty: The Story of Unemployment in New Zealand.** A new film by Alistair Barry. Entry by donation. Sunday, October 6, 2pm, Fickling Centre, 546 Mt Albert Road, Three Kings.

• **Is democracy a 'foreign flower' in the Pacific?** Global Peace & Justice Auckland forum. Hear: David Robie, Pacific journalist and senior lecturer in Communication Studies at AUT; John Ondawame, Australasian representative of the Free Papua Movement. Monday, October 7, 7:30 pm, Trades Hall, 147 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn.

• **The Stop the War movement in Britain.** Socialist Worker public meeting. Speaker: British socialist Alan Gibson. 7:30 pm Tuesday October 15, Trades Hall, 147 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn.

• **The WTO, Gats and Privatisation.** Global Peace & Justice Auckland forum. Hear Jane Kelsey (ARENA), Penny Bright (Water Pressure Group) and others. What's wrong with these plans and what can be done to stop it? See The Last Frontier: Explaining Gats by Claude Barlow. Monday, November 4, 7:30 pm, Trades Hall, 147 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn.

WELLINGTON

• **Peace Action Wellington organising** Come along to get involved in building a mass anti-war campaign. Monday, 30 September, 7 pm, Athena College, 203 Willis St.

• **Protest against war on Iraq.** In solidarity with demonstrations in Washington DC. Details to be confirmed. Contact <peacewellington@hotmail.com>

TOTAL SO FAR \$2685.40

THANKS TO:

AUCKLAND: Anti-war American \$20; Jessie \$10; Jim \$30; Len \$30; Pat \$340; Tim \$1000; Fundraising \$695.40.

TIMBERLANDS: Bernie \$200; Tony \$100.

WELLINGTON: Ra \$10; Frances \$5; Grant \$150; Leah \$10; Ann-Marie \$20.

OTHER AREAS: BA \$5; Ross \$50; Ashley \$10.

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PRINTING PRESS APPEAL

Printing tens of thousands of free leaflets has put an increasing drain on our fragile finances.

So Socialist Worker has launched a new fundraising appeal.

Our target is to raise the \$10,000 needed to finish paying off our printing press. This is a tall order, but it can be done, in 1999 we raised over \$10,000 to help buy the press.

Since then our press has printed hundreds of thousands of newspapers, leaflets and posters, helping to spread socialist ideas and build many united campaigns.

We need your help to continue, so please send us what money you can.

And if you have any suggestions or examples of good ways of fundraising, let us know.

**Please send donations to Box 13-685 Auckland.
Make cheques out to "In Print Publishing".**

Editorial

Resisting war and globalisation

On Saturday September 28, people around the world took to the streets to demonstrate their opposition to the plan, by the rulers of America and Britain, to invade Iraq.

Most significant will be the protests in Washington DC, London and, for us, Auckland and Wellington.

The rise of a global peace movement has followed the global anti-capitalist movement.

The links between globalisation and the so-called "war on terror" are clear.

The US and British governments are champions of both.

It is widely accepted that corporate America's desire to control the oil reserve of the Middle East and Central Asia is a major factor in the war.

And, increasingly, official US documents are spelling out how US military power is vital to protecting US corporations.

We also have the example of our own government's attempts to win a free trade deal with their "very, very good friends" in Washington.

The link goes deep. Both war and corporate globalisation are driven by the pressures of capitalist competition.

Imperialist war is the ultimate expression of capitalism's "profits before people" ethos.

In Aotearoa, October — following the September 28 protests, leading up to the next international day of action on October 26 — will be an important month for building a large and broad anti-war movement.

Within what should be a growing peace movement, Socialist Worker will be trying to bring together those who see resisting war and corporate globalisation as two parts of a wider anti-capitalist struggle. And who want to help to link that with the struggles of unionised workers.



COVER PHOTO: protesting against the capitalist policies of the United Nation's Earth Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa in September.

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Socialist Worker Monthly Review

RESISTING WAR and GLOBALISATION
the left responds



Workers' confidence on the rise

By GRANT BROOKES

Huge strike votes by workers over recent weeks are a clear sign of rising confidence.

4000 nurses in Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Northland have just voted to strike by 92%. Their rolling strikes will begin at Waikato Hospital on October 15, ending in Northland on October 24.

In July, Auckland nurses voted by 95% to strike. Three quarters of union members turned out to vote.

The vote by Otago University staff in August was 91% in favour of action.

The meeting of angry Wellington rail workers on August 22, reported below, was unanimous in calling an immediate wildcat strike.

The rise in workers' confidence is still very uneven. The legacy of years of defeats and



Otago University staff on strike

the smashing of union organisation under the Employment Contracts Act have not yet been completely overcome.

The Auckland nurses weren't confident enough to take wildcat action when their

union officials got a slim majority at poorly-attended meetings (some activists put the turnout as low as 27%) to call off the strike. But confidence is spreading.

The wave of wildcat strikes

by secondary teachers in May and June, backed by mass student walkouts, forced the government to double its offer, give most teachers a 12% pay rise and promise to cut workloads.

Their example has inspired others. When Otago University staff struck in support of an 8% pay claim last month, the vice chancellor complained to TV3 News that "the teachers' settlement has had an impact".

The strike forced university management to double their pathetic initial offer of 1.5%. This offer was also rejected as not enough.

The rising confidence to strike has delivered victories for teachers, rail workers and university staff.

But it also poses questions about how to build on these wins and boost the confidence of more workers.

Wildcat strike wins reinstatement

The power of collective action by rank and file union members was demonstrated by Tranz Metro workers in Wellington last month.

A group of rail workers numbering only around a hundred walked out on a magnificent wildcat strike on August 22.

They defied management intimidation, the Labour government's anti-strike laws, an employment court ruling and attempts by their own union officials to coax them back to work. And they won.

The walkout was sparked by the threatened dismissal of a train driver accused of running a red light.

The driver had been transferred from Napier to Wellington eight months earlier against his wishes.

Unable to sell his house, he was separated from his family who had to stay behind. On top of this, he was suffering health problems. He became depressed and prone to lapses in concentration.

For three weeks before the incident he tried to get special leave. But Tranz Metro man-

agement said he'd taken too many sick days and told him to work on.

After the strike, shocked managers agreed to hold off dismissal pending mediation.

There they accepted union demands that the driver's case should be treated as health issue, not a disciplinary matter.

Wayne Butson, general secretary of the rail workers' union, told Socialist Worker: "He's not going to agree to be sacked. I think that's off the agenda now."

Workers who took part in the strike have been called in for one-on-one "meetings" with management. But these

attempts at intimidation also failed.

By standing strong and united, the rail workers forced a climb down by high-handed and dictatorial bosses.

Tranz Metro have now brought in a new manager from Auckland with a more "softly, softly" approach.

'MANAGEMENT WERE FLABBERGASTED'

A Tranz Metro driver tells how the wildcat strike began:

The union rep came in and said: "It looks like Neil [not his real name] might be going". We went into a meeting.

There were 100 people in the room. We told [acting union secretary Brian] Cronin to get him back on the roster.

But the strike wasn't just about Neil. Neil was only discussed for 20 minutes. This was our second wildcat strike this year. He was just a spark plug, to fire everyone up again about management.

We've got a problem with management, who've got double standards. It's like: "If you make a cock-up, we'll get you. If we make a cock-up, it's OK."

We've had two situations lately where track work was being done, and management forgot to book the replacement buses. The trains

got in two hours late.

But there's no repercussions. If we arrive four minutes late, they're onto us.

They keep picking on everybody. A guy with a broken leg was forced back to work, to make the ACC figures look better. He couldn't walk, but he had to work.

There's not enough support for the staff on board.

The strike was led by the local delegates, not the union officials.

Management came in and ordered us back to work. Then they started suspending people.

They suspended 7 drivers and 7 guards. When that didn't get them anywhere they turned around and walked out.

I was amazed we did it, actually. Management were flabbergasted.

WHICH WAY FORWARD?

'Partnership' with government and business...

The top officials of the Council of Trade Unions did not support the wildcat strikes that delivered a victory for secondary teachers.

CTU president Ross Wilson even branded the rebel teachers "undemocratic".

Their idea of the way forward for workers, contained in a new CTU report called *Unions, Innovation & Sustainable Development*, is through a "social compact" instead.

The CTU report is 28 pages of "management speak" that few workers are likely to read. It says that unions should look on government and business as "partners".

This "partner" is the government that posted a \$3 billion budget surplus but refused a pay rise to teachers.

It's the same government that's telling

health boards to cut real wages by limiting pay rises to 2% — less than inflation.

Labour's hard line reflects the wishes of business, who are no more friendly to workers.

The CTU report admits that "from 1984 to 1999, we heard often about the need to create the conditions for private firms to be profitable and then everything would 'trickle down' to workers, communities and small business. In fact, the profits didn't trickle down."

Yet all it offers is more of the same — "improving productivity", "strengthening our medium-sized and larger businesses" and "assisting industry development" in the hope of higher wages.

A *Dominion Post* editorial summed up

the CTU's 'trickle down' ideas as "policies that are good for the country, and therefore its workforce."

Ross Wilson admits "there is a high degree of scepticism after the experience of the 1980s and 1990s".

That's an understatement. In 1988, the CTU leaders signed up to a "social compact" with government and business just like the one on offer now.

It sank without trace after it was rejected by mass meetings of angry workers.

The CTU report says: "You are welcome to contact us with your comments".

"Partnership" won't build workers' confidence. Unionists should tell Ross Wilson to forget about "partnership" and start supporting wildcat strikes.

... Or freedom to strike?

Wildcat strikes by teachers in May and June were illegal. So was the wildcat strike by Wellington rail workers in August.

Under the Employment Relations Act, passed by Labour in 2000, all strikes are illegal except those over an urgent health danger or an expired job contract.

Even then, advance notice must be given. Illegal strikers can be fined \$40,000 or sent to prison.

But the growing confidence of workers to strike, regardless of the law, has brought a debate within the ranks of government out into the open.

Finance minister Michael Cullen is inviting Business NZ and the Council of Trade Unions to enter a "partnership"

along with the government.

Labour minister Margaret Wilson, meanwhile, wrote to Business NZ and the CTU in May asking their views on ratifying two International Labour Organisation conventions extending the legal right to strike.

From the government's side, these represent two options for heading off workers' militancy — argue that workers are on the same side as employers, or change the law to make it more enforceable.

But the second option would also mean more space for workers to organise.

Ratifying the ILO conventions would mean legalising "political" strikes, like union bans on handling GE products, and

"sympathy" strikes by one group of workers in support of another group covered by a different employment agreement.

The fact this option is even being considered is a tribute to wildcat teachers and other strikers.

In August, Green Party co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons used her speech on the opening of parliament to support ratification of the ILO conventions. On paper, the CTU supports extending the right to strike too — although you wouldn't know it from hearing them talk.

Removing the harsh penalties in the law books for illegal strikes could boost the rising confidence of workers and help more of them strike to win.

'What do we do about the officials?'

A conversation between a guard and a driver on a Wellington train was overheard by *Socialist Worker Monthly Review*.

"The delegates are alright", said the guard. "But what do we do about the officials?"

It's a question that will come up more often if workers' confidence to strike keeps growing.

The wildcat strike by Wellington rail workers in August that prevented an unfair dismissal took place while the union general secretary was away on leave.

On his return, he immediately made it clear the strike was "morally unacceptable".

Full-time union officials

are not all the same as him. But they have some things in common.

Officials are usually paid twice or even three times as much as their members. Top officials get even more.

They don't have to put up with daily hassles with the boss, and they don't rub shoulders with supportive workmates.

A lot of their time is spent hobnobbing with politicians or in meetings with employers. If they negotiate a pay cut or job losses, they don't lose their own job or their high salary.

The salaries of officials depend on accumulated union funds, so illegal actions like wildcat strikes that could land

the union with a big fine send shivers up their spine.

PPTA president Jen McCutcheon blasted the wildcat strikes by secondary teachers as "irresponsible". Strikers were even threatened by the PPTA executive with expulsion from the union.

But as McCutcheon found out, union officials can be forced to change their tune. Teacher delegates and PPTA activists organised joint actions across schools independently of the officials.

Over 200 teachers from Wellington, Wainuiomata and as far north as Kapiti organised their own rally at parliament.

Wellington teachers even

set up an unofficial website to co-ordinate activity by rank and file union members.

Expulsion threats were dropped and McCutcheon, while still not endorsing wildcat strikes, gritted her teeth and praised the strikers. "They are pretty staunch out there", she said.

As John, a Wellington teacher, put it: "We've taken the power away from the union executive and the thing is to keep it."

When rank and file union members form big networks of delegates across worksites and start organising their own action, the officials can be pulled in behind.

Promise of Private Profit

By DAVID COLYER

"The Heineken of privatisation — taking the private sector to the parts of the government machine not reached by previous privatisations," this fitting description of private-public partnerships (PPP) comes from Sir Alister Morton, a member of the British Labour government's Private Finance Panel.

PPP are "a model for the future" according to finance minister Michael Cullen. New Zealand's Labour government began talking about them at the end of last year. The new Local Government Bill promotes partnerships between councils and corporations in areas like transport and water.

In Auckland, mayor John Banks wants his new motorways to be PPP toll roads, and has even suggested reintroducing a toll on the harbour bridge to fund his road-building frenzy. In Wellington, transport multinational Stagecoach and the Wellington Regional Council have entered into a 50/50 joint venture to takeover the Tranz Metro passenger rail services.

The New Zealand Labour Party's admiration for Britain's "New Labour" government is no secret. And there are indications that this country may follow the British example and extend PPP into other areas, like health.

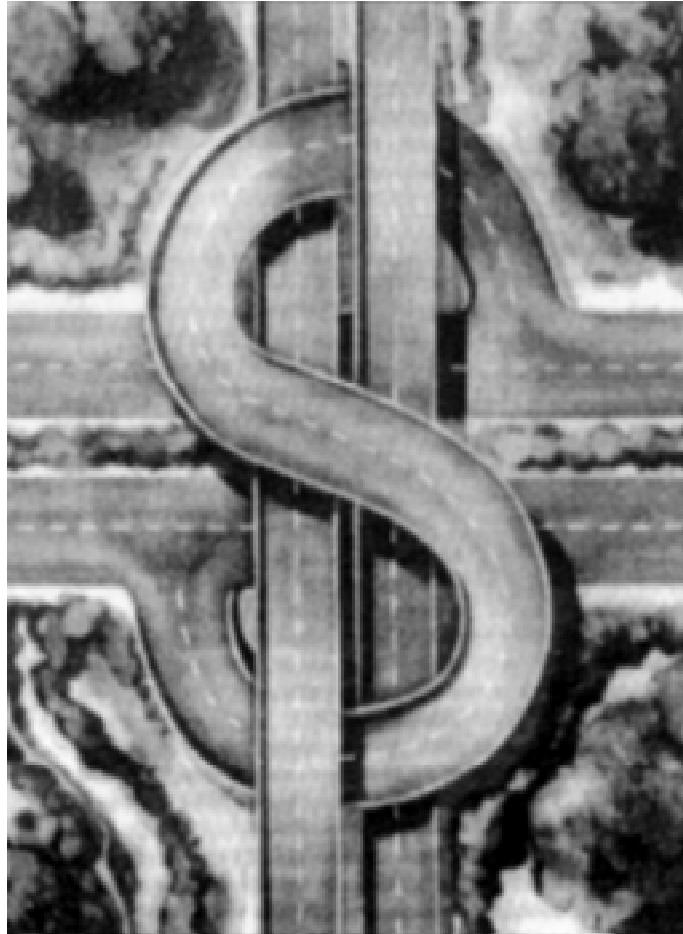
During the election campaign, Peter Dunne leader of United Future, the christian party now supporting the Labour-led government, talked of a "common sense" approach to health policies, according to his office, this means, "government owned health care providers and privately owned businesses should compete for government health contracts."

That's not quite a PPP, but they obviously support the idea of public health funding being pumped into the pockets of private companies.

And the agreement they stitched up with Labour demands that PPP transport legislation be in place by the end of the year.

A good summary of the British PPP policy (also called the private finance initiative) comes from a recent study* published in the *British Medical Journal*:

"Since 1992 the British government has favoured paying for capital works in the public service through the private finance initiative (PFI) that is, through loans raised by the private sector. For hospitals this means that a private sector consortium designs, builds, finances, and operates the



hospital. In return the NHS trust pays an annual fee to cover both the capital cost, including the cost of borrowing, and maintenance of the hospital and any non-clinical services provided over the 25-35 year life of the contract."

The study's authors go on to argue that PFI / PPP schemes have been bad for the British health system:

"There is no evidence that PFI has increased overall levels of service. On the contrary... the high cost of PFI schemes has presented NHS trusts with an affordability gap. This has been closed by external subsidies, the diversion of funds from clin-

ical budgets, sales of assets, appeals for charitable donations, and, crucially, by 30% cuts in bed capacity and 20% reductions in staff in hospitals financed through PFI... PFI has also had a negative impact on levels of service."

The authors note that: "The government's claim is that PFI delivers value for money through lowering costs over the life of the project because of greater private sector efficiency and because the private sector assumes the risks that the public sector normally carries."

This is the same argument being put forward in this country to support PPP roads. Stuart Lea a Deutsche Bank executive, suggested to the *NZ Herald* that the sort of "innovation" the public sector might come up with is putting down a thinner layer of tarseal. That's just the sort of bold initiative you'd expect from the New Zealand construction industry. Maybe they could do a "risk assessment" on building motorway overbridges out of untreated timber and see what happens.

Lea also said the British government had found an average 12% saving in the first eight PPP toll roads. In the health sector, the British study concluded that similar government claims of cost savings in PPP hospitals were based on financial "sleight of hand" and "assessment skewed in favour of private finance".

*Allyson M Pollock, Jean Shaoul and Neil Vickers, "Private finance and 'value for money' in NHS hospitals: a policy in search of a rationale?" in the *British Medical Journal* 2002;324:1205-1209 (18 May), online at <<http://bmj.com>>.

Price-rise for Poorest in Papakura

One example of a public-private partnership already running in this country is the contract between the Papakura District Council (PDC) and United Water, a consortium of two big water multinationals.

A study by Papakura Waterpressure group shows that this privatisation has shifted costs on to poorer homeowners.

The old PDC water charges, like other rates, were based on property value. But, in typical user-pays fashion, United Water makes everyone pay the same rate, whether they can afford it or not.

So if your home is worth \$50,000 you payed \$323 in 1997, but this year you pay \$585. But if your house is worth \$150,000, you pay less. In 1997 you paid \$645, this year your bill is only \$585. (The figures are all for 200,000 litres of water.)

Auckland campaign waking up

By DAVID COLYER

Wake Up Auckland, a broad united front of Aucklanders opposed to the policies of Auckland City Mayor John Banks, seems to be reviving after a dull winter.

On September 16, 58 people met to discuss the future of the campaign.

Last summer, Banks and his Citizen's and Ratepayers Now cronies were harried by a series of high profile protests. The last of these was a magnificent 4,000-strong march up Queen Street on March 16.

The Labour-led government felt it had to make an appearance of opposing Bank's privatisation push, they changed laws to require more "consultation".

Revelations about how the new Local Government Bill would assist Bank's plans caused serious problems for former Alliance Deputy Leader Sandra Lee, who was Local Government Minister at the time.

For several months Wake Up Auckland focused on the City Council submission process. Also, new campaign groups were established and existing groups continued to challenge different aspects of the Council's "profits before people" policy. As is usually the case, the Council ignored the opinions of the vast majority of submissions and continued with its programme.

For most of last month's meeting activists from the different campaign's told their stories. This was followed by discussion of each issue: transport, especially the proposed eastern highway toll road; spraying to kill the painted apple moth; water privatisation, the sell-off of council housing; council airport shares; a campaign for the single transferable voting system; the restructuring of council departments and possible redundancies.

Ideas on how to advance each campaign and the movement as a whole were raised.

A young man suggested that an alternative council of Wake Up Auckland activists would be a good way to promote a people-centred Auckland. This idea, he explained, was inspired by the radical British journalist George Monbiot who campaigns against war and corporate domination.

Penny Bright of the Water Pressure Group warned that public private partnerships (PPPs) were a central part of Bank's plans for more privatisation. She also mentioned anti-privatisation struggles in South Africa and Bolivia. At Penny's suggestion, it was agreed that Wake Up Auckland would support a public meeting on PPPs.

I spoke at the end of the meeting, arguing that we needed another protest march. This would show the links between all the campaigns and demonstrate that there was still wide-spread opposition to Banks, his council and their plans. I added that, in the past, big victories — like cutting ties with South Africa and going nuclear free — had been won by big numbers on the street and, although it was along time since we'd won a victory like that, mass protest was still the most powerful weapon we had.

The idea of a march was agreed to. And it was decided to hold another meeting on September 30.

Marney Ainsworth, Wake Up Auckland's facilitator, ended the meeting by putting the campaign in a wider perspective:

"Labour is under tremendous pressure from the right wing; the war drums are beating and big business is demanding the government does what it's told. Labour need a grassroots opposition to push them to the left."

*For the latest news on the campaign:
Email <wakeupauckland@xtra.co.nz>
Phone Marney 376 6213*

The New Zealand government, too, should weigh the merits of again standing alongside like-minded countries in coming months, and should be prepared to do whatever it can to help Iraqis move beyond the tyranny of Saddam.

• *Dominion Post* editorial of August 10 calls on Helen Clark to line up with Australia and Britain and back a US war on Iraq.

The government should hold firm. There is no imperative or justification for New Zealand's involvement at this stage.

• *Dominion Post* editorial, September 5.

When we did our research, one of our key findings was that potential recruits were put off by things like guns, mud, camouflage, all that typical army imagery.

• AIMEE McCAMMON of advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi admits the reality of life in the NZ army isn't appealing. That's why her firm has made sexist, computer-generated TV ads instead.

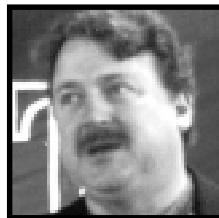


4,000 Aucklanders took to the street on March 16 to protest against the city council. Now the movement is reviving.

FILLING THE POLITICAL VACUUM ON THE LEFT

With the elimination of the Alliance as a "responsible" parliamentary force — courtesy of Jim Anderton, the trade union movement and the Labour Party — a vast swathe of political territory has been left unoccupied. The ground vacated by the "centre-left" extends all the way from middle class students still clamouring for an end to tertiary fees, to unorganised workers struggling to survive on \$9.50 an hour, to beneficiaries attempting to live on benefits that were inadequate in 1992 and are nothing short of scandalous in 2002. It is a massive slice of the population pie-graph — representing as many as one in three New Zealanders — and it constitutes an historic challenge for what remains of the Left, as well as an ominous opportunity for the populist parties of the Right. Because whoever succeeds in filling this political vacuum will be in a position to exercise a decisive influence over the future direction of New Zealand society.

Before weighing up the respective chances of Left and Right in this unfenced political landscape, a few words must be said about why Labour has ignored it. The most obvious explanation is that the young, the poor, and the marginalised don't vote. This is truer now than it has been for more than seventy years. In the 2002 General Election barely three-quarters of registered voters bothered to turn up to the polling booths — the lowest turnout since 1928. The vast majority of the abstainers



By CHRIS TROTTER*

would have fallen into one or more of the three categories listed above. Why invest limited party resources in groups which return so meagre a political dividend? The amount of organisation required simply isn't feasible for today's Labour Party — especially when many more votes can be won for much less effort off the Right.

The other reason why the Labour Party steers clear of these wide-open political lands is that the policies required to bring them under its sway would cost far too much. Abandoning tertiary fees is estimated to cost close to \$600 million; restoring the Benefit Cuts of 1992 close to \$2 billion; and recasting New Zealand's industrial environment so as to significantly lift the wages of the unskilled and semi-skilled workforce would see the private sector contribute twice that amount. To pay for such reforms taxes would have to rise to levels not seen in this country since the

early 1980s, and companies would be required to forgo a substantial portion of their annual profit. Labour remains unconvinced that the new supporters such measures might attract would outnumber the old supporters which they would certainly drive away.

In the short-to-medium term Labour's thinking makes perfect sense, but long term it is a recipe for electoral impotence. As the American Democratic Party has discovered to its cost, if you give up on the poor and the disadvantaged in favour of the comfortably-off, your centre of political gravity will inevitably drift further and further to the right. Less and less disposed to take initiatives that would cost its well-off voters money, the Democrats have become trapped between a burgeoning underclass with fewer and fewer reasons to vote for them, and a contracting middle class with more and more reasons to vote against them. If Labour continues to follow a centrist line here in New Zealand, it will soon find itself in exactly the same predicament.

The big — and possibly the saving — difference between the USA and New Zealand is, of course, MMP. Proportional representation affords the radical parties of Left and Right much greater scope for practising the politics of addition — i.e. building new constituencies: rather than the politics of subtraction — i.e. stealing someone else's voters.



Green MP
Keith Locke
(left) and
Alliance
president Matt
McCarten
speaking at a
peace rally in
Auckland last
year.

Protesters
march down
Queen Street
after the rally
(opposite
page).



Building the new Left

To date, the best exponents of the Politics of Addition have been the Greens. In both of the last two elections the Green Party improved upon its election night showing by one additional seat largely because young people and Maori felt sufficiently motivated by the Greens' policies to participate in the electoral process. With fewer than 3,000 members, the Green Party is too small to organise more than a few thousand of these "additional" voters into the polling booths. Even so, it has demonstrated the enormous electoral potential of the marginalised and/or disillusioned sectors.

With nine seats in Parliament — compared to the Alliance's none — the Greens have automatically become the focus of left-wing hopes for the next three years. On three key issues — keeping New Zealand GE-Free, opposing any US invasion of Iraq, and action against child poverty — they have already assumed a leadership role. What will be interesting to watch is how they link their parliamentary functions with the extra-parliamentary movements which are already forming around these and other causes.

On the GE issue, for example, there is already talk of launching a Citizens Initiated Referendum seeking a properly funded and binding referendum on whether or not New Zealand should allow the commercial release of genetically engineered organisms. Groups such as GE-Free New Zealand, the Sustainability Council, Mothers Against Genetic Engineering, Greenpeace and the Alliance could be expected to join with the Greens in collecting the 250,000 signatures required. Quite apart from the pressure it would place upon the Labour-PCP Coalition — as well as the GE-wary United Future Party — such a broad front would also add much needed bulk to the membership base of the Green Party.

A broad extra-parliamentary front

drawn together over GE would rapidly expand to embrace an even larger fraction of the community if the Americans made good their threat to bring about "regime change" in Iraq. Large numbers of students — especially Muslim students studying at New Zealand universities — could be expected to participate, along with members of the main Christian denominations, and a fairly large chunk of the trade union movement.

If, as seems likely, the Americans and Australians attempt to secure New Zealand's participation in the invasion of Iraq by offering a free-trade deal embracing all three of the old ANZUS allies as an inducement — an offer Helen Clark would have great difficulty refusing — then severe political tensions, both within the Council of Trade Unions and between the CTU and the Government, would almost certainly be the result. International experience suggests that free-trade with the United States would entail the elimination of the state's dominant position in such key public sectors as welfare administration, health and education, and water and energy supply — sectors in which union density has remained relatively high. On the Government's side, the powerful Engineers Union could be expected to advance a pro-free-trade, pro-intervention position — as it did at last year's CTU conference when trade unionists debated New Zealand's military involvement in Afghanistan.

The trade union arena may also provide the context for one of the most ambitious extra-parliamentary initiatives of the Left over the next three years. Alliance strongman, Matt McCarten, is currently investigating the logistical issues surrounding an all-out push to organise New Zealand's low-paid workers. According to McCarten, only three percent of workers earning less than \$30,000 per year are un-

ionised — leaving as many as quarter-of-a-million casual and full-time employees without on-the-job protection. McCarten's record as a highly successful motivator of mass industrial action in the hospitality industry back in the 1980s makes the project something more than just another leftist pipe-dream. If he could generate similar levels of militancy in the current climate, the possibility opens up of significant and lasting structural changes in both the industrial and the political landscape of New Zealand.

The Alliance's greatest weakness was its lack of enduring structural and institutional links with the underprivileged constituencies it sought to mobilise. If McCarten succeeds in building a mass union for low-paid workers, and the Alliance becomes the political expression of that industrial force, then Labour's de facto stranglehold on the working-class vote will be broken and a whole new set of ideological and programmatic possibilities opened up.

Alliance Leader, Laila Harré — herself only recently appointed to a leading role in the 30,000-strong Nurses Union — has been warning audiences of Alliance members around the country that their failure to successfully occupy the vacant political territory on the left of the political spectrum will simply prompt quasi-fascist elements to fill the vacuum. Racial hostility, reactionary moral crusades, and virulent anti-unionism have always found an attentive audience among the marginalised, embittered and often frankly criminal elements which inhabit the darker recesses of our divided society. As always, she says, the Left's failure will be the Right's opportunity.

*Chris Trotter is the editor of the New Zealand Political Review. This article was originally published in The Independent Business Weekly August 28.



Building the new Left

BUILD A 'MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS'

The huge numbers at the grassroots of New Zealand society who are disillusioned with parliamentary politics provide enormous opportunities for the Left.

The lack of faith in mainstream parties even extends beyond those identified by Chris Trotter — students, unorganised low-income workers and beneficiaries.

As one delegate in the nurses' union in Wellington put it recently: "I'm sick of voting to lose."

But along with big opportunities come big questions.

The debate on how the Left can best relate to these groups is made more urgent by the rise in support — modest, but still worrying — for the racist policies of NZ First. Chris Trotter's contribution to this important debate is welcomed by Socialist Worker.

We share the view that building "a broad, extra-parliamentary front" on the Left is key to relating to the growing numbers disillusioned with Labour.

But to succeed, this broad coalition needs to focus on organising mass action against war, genetic engineering and other local and national issues that arise.

Only a "movement of movements" like this will be big and broad enough to present a realistic alternative to the huge numbers who want change but are disillusioned with "official channels".

Across Europe, centre-Left coalition governments much like ours have been tumbling amid falling voter turnouts and political polarisation to the Left and Right.

The European anti-capitalist and anti-war movements, which continue to mushroom despite a media blackout, are giving rise to broad coalitions on the Left like the Italian Social Forum and the European Social Forum, which has its founding conference next month.

The same processes, while less developed, are at work here.

Two years ago, Helen Clark admitted: "From the mid 1980s many New Zealanders felt cheated by the political process."

"By 1999 trust and confidence in our democratic process was at a low ebb."

The aim of the Labour-Alliance government, according to the coalition agreement, was "to restore public confidence in the political integrity of Parliament".

They have failed for the same reason as their centre-Left colleagues in Europe.

Their commitment to making capitalism work has forced them to attack their working class supporters.

Despite winning more seats in this year's election, Labour's vote in 2002 was down on 1999 thanks to the historically low turnout at the polls.



By GRANT BROOKES

There were no celebrations by workers comparable to the joyous scenes on election night, 1999.

Instead, election year has seen major industrial battles between Labour and secondary teachers.

The 92% strike vote by more than 4000 nurses, in Waikato, the Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Northland, reflects seething discontent with Labour among health workers.

Disillusionment with Labour has set in even during a "dream run" for the economy over the last three years.

With the current economic instabilities in America threatening to become a full-blown recession, Labour's attacks on its working class supporters over the next three years are likely to become more vicious.

This will accelerate the political polarisation.

As Chris Trotter points out, the Green Party has been the most successful to date

in relating to those polarising Left.

They have done this by identifying with mass movements — first against GE, then against capitalist institutions like the World Economic Forum and more recently in support of tino rangitiratanga and the growing movement against America's wars.

But the Greens have not monopolised the field. Alongside their success has been the growth, on a smaller scale than overseas but along similar lines, of broad coalitions like Global Peace and Justice Auckland.

There are also hopeful signs of a shift in the Alliance back to involvement in grassroots movements.

What is the way forward in building the broad coalitions? Chris is optimistic about building a broad extra-parliamentary front through a Citizens Initiated Referendum on GE.

The defining moment of the GE Free campaign, however, was the 20,000-strong march up Queen Street on 1 September last year.

This huge demonstration forced a U-turn from the Labour-led government, shifted public opinion against GE and bolstered support for the Green Party.

Five weeks before the march, prime minister Helen Clark had praised the report of the Royal Commission on GE as "thorough, balanced and measured".

The Royal Commission did not recommend a moratorium.

But on 6 September, five days after the



The 20,000-strong GE free march last year, had the feel of overseas anti-capitalist protests.



Movement of movements: Global Peace and Justice Auckland unites a wide range of people against war and corporate globalisation.

march, Helen Clark announced that the government would consider a moratorium on the commercial or conditional release of genetically engineered crops or animals.

The NBR-Compaq opinion poll showed that public opposition to genetic modification also rose in September to 42%, up from 34% in mid-August.

The Green Party identified with this mass movement and its poll ratings, as measured by UMR Research, jumped from 6% to a record high of over 8%.

Socialist Worker campaigned within the movement for a date to be set for another day of mass protests against GE.

But socialists were a small minority.

The leadership of the GE Free movement is much more influenced by Green Party thinking.

They failed to appreciate the power of mass action, and did not draw in the thousands who protested so as to organise on an even bigger scale. In the lead-up to the election, the Greens toned down their radicalism in the hope of winning favour with Labour and being offered a place in government.

Now the leadership of the GE Free movement, further and further removed from mass discontent, have opted for a Citizens Initiated Referendum in place of mass action.

In this context, a referendum represents a step backwards for the Left. Indeed, the failure to draw in wider layers after last year's protests has left the movement with a very small and shrinking core of activists.

There are now so few activists that despite the widespread opposition to GE, collecting the 250,000 signatures required for a referendum looks like a very big ask.

A better starting point for building a broad coalition on the Left is the growing movement against the war in Iraq.

Anti-war activists are less encumbered by a recent history of failed strategies.

And many are starting at a more generalised opposition to the system, rather than a single issue like GE.

The broad platform of issues embraced by Global Peace and Justice Auckland this year has included war, poverty and the Palestinian struggle for freedom.

Crucially, the groups active against the war — unlike the GE campaigners — are involved in organising protests.

The practical tasks of organising this mass action create the need for closer links on the Left and drive the formation of broad coalitions.

These can then go beyond the single issue of the war and lay the basis of a "movement of movements".

The wavering by the Greens over a strategy of mass action against GE should also serve as lesson.

So should the fact that the Green Party does not strive to mobilise anything like its full membership of 3,000 into the movements on the streets.

A party that aims for a place alongside Labour in government, like the Greens or a reborn Alliance, cannot dedicate itself unwaveringly to building a "movement of

movements".

Equally, a party seeking the backing of top trade union officials, again like the Greens or the Alliance, can be reluctant to take their politics directly to rank and file union members.

They may fear accusations of "meddling in union affairs".

As the anti-nuclear campaign of the 1970s and 80s showed, action by unionised workers — like the strikes by Wellington watersiders against nuclear ship visits — adds tremendous weight to a political movement.

So one final key to the success of the Left in coming months and years will be the growth of a socialist current within a broad, extra-parliamentary front.

Socialists stand with the union rank and file, not the officials.

So they are less open to pressure from the officials to "keep politics out of the union".

And socialists do not tone down mass action to appear as a "responsible coalition partner" in government.

Socialist Worker is committed to the success of the Left.

To achieve this, we support the creation of a movement of movements big enough and broad enough to draw in the wide layers of people alienated from establishment politics.

But we are also working to form a socialist current within it that links the struggles of today with the aim of abolishing capitalism.

Economic fears drive US to war

Once a US invasion has removed Hussein from power, a friendly successor regime would become a major exporter of oil to the West. That oil would diminish US dependence on Saudi energy exports.

• From White House report leaked to the Washington Post.

The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

• From *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces And Resources For A New Century*, written by key members of the Bush Administration in September 2000.

By VAUGHAN GUNSON

Share prices on Wall Street have plummeted to 1997 levels. The world economy is looking shaky. Profits of US corporations are down.

This is the background to the Bush administration's so-called "war on terrorism", a war was planned well before September 11 2001.

In September 2000, Dick Cheney (now vice-president), Donald Rumsfeld (defence secretary) and Jeb Bush (the president's brother) wrote a document titled *Rebuilding America's Defences: Strategies, Forces And Resources For A New Century*. They did so because they were fearful that the US was losing its position as the pre-eminent economic power.

The Chinese economy is predicted by many to surpass the US in size within two decades. The combined economies of the European Union are already rivalling US manufacturing output.

Rebuilding America's Defences was written as a "blueprint for maintaining global US pre-eminence, precluding the rise of a great power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests."

In the second half of the 1990s the American economy pushed ahead due to massive restructuring, increased exploitation of workers, and a blind rush of foreign investment into the over-hyped US stockmarket.

US companies also benefited from the floundering of the Japanese economy, which had been the US's major economic rival in the 1980s.

On paper, it appeared that the US economy had even escaped the fall-out from the Asian economic crisis in 1997 and 1998.

The Federal Reserve (US equivalent of the Reserve Bank) dropped interest rates to record lows to encourage consumer and investor spending. This kept the economy ticking over, but at a cost. Companies and households racked-up huge debt.

Many corporations began to falsify their balance sheets to boost their share prices. The real economy was functioning at level well below what the booming US stock market suggested. The "bubble" had to burst.

Months before September 2001, a US stockbroker told reporters that the US economy could be summed up as, "Help! I've fallen and can't get up!"

The 2001 recession — from which the US has not yet recovered — has only heightened the urgency of the Bush administration. They have taken advantage of post-September 11 patriotism to push forward with their military plan.

Since the 1920s, when the extent of the oil reserves in the region became evident, and oil emerged as the number one commodity of the capitalist economy, rival powers have tried to assert their control over the Middle East.

The US has been the foremost power since WWII and Israel has been its watchdog in the region. They also supported compliant dictators, like the Saud family in Saudi Arabia and (until 1991) Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

The Rebuilding America's Defences "blueprint" now calls for more direct intervention in the Persian Gulf, as a way of staying ahead of China and the European Union.

The war on Afghanistan has already enabled the US to establish military bases around the Caspian Sea, a region thought to have substantial oil and gas reserves.

A White House report leaked to the Washington Post spells out what a "regime change" in Iraq would mean:

"Once a US invasion has removed Hussein from power, a friendly successor regime would become a major exporter of oil to the West. That oil would diminish US dependence on Saudi energy exports."

Any puppet rulers put in place by the US could only hope to stay in the power with the continued backing of the US. Many Iraqis might hate Saddam but they hate the US more. So US troops would have to be stationed in Iraq indefinitely, destabilising the whole region.

The US would also be stepping on the toes of France and Russia who have substantial oil investments in Iraq.

The Bush administration is set upon a risky strategy to maintain global dominance. But they are pushed along by domestic political concerns, a worsening world economy, and unwillingness to step back now that they have gone so far.

Bosses's pushing for dirty trade-off

National MP Lockwood Smith's response to the government's perceived reluctance to back a US first-strike against Iraq was that New Zealand could "kiss a free-trade agreement with the US goodbye".

This comment shows the callousness of sections of New Zealand's ruling class, who can only see dollar signs, not the bodies of thousands of innocent men, women and children.

At a time when the US is struggling to gain support around the world for an attack on Iraq, some New Zealand bosses feel that it is the right time to curry favour with the Bush administration.

The result might be the economic bonanza of a free trade deal with the US, that "glittering prize" that catches the eye of so many New Zealand capitalists.

And here's the dilemma for the Labour government. They too are keen on a free trade deal. They too wish to develop closer relations with the US.

This is why the government rushed to sign-up to the international coalition "against terror", and promptly dispatched SAS troops to Afghanistan.

At the APEC conference in October 2001, Clark told President Bush that New Zealand wanted to be "the first cab off the rank" when it came to free trade deals.

"It's dairy which is the big prize for us and meat, of course, is also very important," said Clark on her return from APEC.

And in March this year Clark had a cosy 50 minute meeting with Bush at the White House, where she reaffirmed New Zealand's support for the war and pushed for a trade deal.

But Labour leaders know that there is little public support for a war on Iraq. A TV3 poll on September 23 found 84% opposed to a unilateral American attack.

Many within the Labour Party are opposed. As is Progressive Coalition MP Matt Robson.

For the time being, even foreign minister Phil Goff is trying to distance the government from a blood for trade deal, saying, "trading body bags for a deal is irrational, unwise and immoral".

Yet Labour still wants to keep business happy. They know that New Zealand will not escape the worsening world economy for much longer.

When the full effects of economic downturn do hit, business will be clamoring for the government to act.

A free trade deal ensuring access to the huge US market would go along way towards keeping the bosses happy.

This places Labour in a conundrum. How not to get too offside with the US,

and therefore New Zealand business, but at the same time be sensitive to growing opposition to war.

The answer for Labour has been to declare that any attack on Iraq must be mandated by the United Nations (UN).

Then the Labour government could claim that it is on the side of international unity, with the UN acting as an international court condemning Iraq to punishment by US bombs.

The Labour-led government is desperate to avoid being seen to be making ugly trade-offs between war casualties and business profits. It has staked out a position separate from the gung-ho calls coming from National and Act.

But neither is Helen Clark arguing wholeheartedly against the madness of the Bush administration, who are intent on war at any cost.

Labour is not prepared to come out strongly against the war for the same reason that they haven't done anything to fix the health system, or restore workers' freedom to strike, or get rid of student loans.

They want to keep onside with business.

They might not be putting it as bluntly as Lockwood Smith, but they are negotiating daily a path where profits and human lives are in balance.



Good friends, at what price?

MADE IN BRITAIN AND AMERICA

How they have 'changed' every regime in Iraq

"Regime change" in Iraq is the cry from George W Bush and the warmongers. Western powers, particularly Britain, have been changing regimes in Iraq since its creation—with disastrous consequences for its people. **HELEN SHOOTER** explains.

HOW BRITAIN CREATED IRAQ

Britain set up Iraq in 1922. The area had been three separate provinces—Basra, Baghdad and Mosul—which were part of the Ottoman Empire run from Turkey.

Britain's rulers wanted the territory after oil reserves were discovered there in the late 19th century. The Anglo-Persian oil company had drilling rights across 500,000 square miles in the region.

Britain seized its chance during the First World War to occupy Basra and Baghdad.

The allied powers defeated Turkey alongside Germany. As Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, said, "The allies floated to victory on a wave of oil."

He said he wanted the Persian Gulf to become a "British lake". Britain and France had drawn up a secret deal in 1916, the Sykes-Picot Treaty, where they agreed to divide the Arab territories among themselves. The Bolshevik revolutionary government in Russia revealed it in 1917. It showed that Britain and France had no

intention of granting the Arabs' hope for independence.

This was despite the call Britain had made during the war for the Arabs to revolt against the Turks. The Arab revolt and the promises made by Britain's rulers are shown in the film *Lawrence of Arabia*.

The British military moved quickly to subdue Iraq. The RAF bombed Kurdish areas in northern Iraq in 1919 and 1920 where there were uprisings against British rule.

Arthur "Bomber" Harris said, "The Arab and the Kurd now know what real bombing means in casualties and damage. Within 45 minutes a full-size village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured." Winston Churchill, secretary of state for war, said, "I am strongly in favour of using poisonous gas against uncivilised tribes."

The League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, allowed Britain and France to carve the Middle East up. Britain got a mandate to run Iraq (now made up of all three provinces) and Palestine in 1920. It drew up the borders creating Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1922.

The main aim in creating Kuwait was to prevent the new Iraq from having access to the Gulf—this could have allowed it to threaten British dominance.

Britain then manoeuvred to install a ruler in Iraq who it could rely on. A Foreign Office official said, "What is wanted is a king who will be content to reign but not govern."

The new Middle East department of the Colonial Office, headed by Winston Churchill, decided to install Emir Faisal ibn Hussain as king of Iraq. Faisal had not set

foot in Iraq before he was made king in 1921.

British administrators ensured laws were passed to favour the ruling class of large landowners who came from the minority Sunni population. They rigged elections to the puppet parliament.

Britain and the US formed the Iraqi Petroleum Company, which got the right to drill in every part of the old Ottoman Empire in 1928.

BRITAIN'S LEGACY

King Faisal was under constant pressure from ordinary people, who hated British rule.

Britain finally granted Iraq independence in 1932 after a wave of strikes and protests the previous year.

The British High Commission admitted the situation "reveals surprising lack of support for the present government, and unpopularity of King Faisal. Republican cries have been openly raised in the streets."

But Britain retained a stranglehold on power in Iraq, keeping control over oil and maintaining air bases.

Even most of Iraq's upper classes were excluded from power. There were repeated coup attempts. Each faction that seized power used the British-equipped and British-trained army to crush opposition.

Iraq's rulers were prepared to use that force against workers and to defend British oil interests.

Some 5,000 workers went on strike in the Iraqi Petroleum Company for higher wages. The strike united workers across ethnic and religious lines. The government sent in mounted police who killed ten



Saddam Hussein, former friend.

workers at a mass meeting.

After the Second World War Britain withdrew its troops, deciding to rely on puppet rulers to defend its oil interests.

Popular unrest and strikes grew throughout the country as the gap between rich and poor widened. The cost of living increased fivefold between 1939 and 1957. Some 80% of the population were illiterate in 1958.

The pro-British monarchy in Iraq was a bulwark against radical change in the Middle East. It was at the centre of opposing the radical movement of Gamal Abdul Nasser, which overthrew the British-backed monarchy in Egypt in 1952 and which preached radical change uniting all Arabs against imperialism. The Baghdad Pact in 1953 was a NATO-sponsored agreement among states in the region, led by Iraq, to contain Nasserism.

The rulers of Britain and France were thrown into panic when they failed to stop Nasser nationalising the Suez Canal in 1956. The "Suez crisis" provoked a wave of anti-British agitation throughout the region.

The Iraqi monarchy fell in 1958 to a military revolt led by Abdul Karim Qasim. Qasim made popular promises of land reform and negotiations for a greater share of the oil wealth.

Britain sent troops to neighbouring Jordan. The US sent troops to Lebanon. They were desperate to crush the Qasim gov-

ernment and turned to the Ba'athist Party (which Saddam Hussein now leads) to spearhead right-wing resistance in Iraq.

The CIA backed a Ba'athist coup in 1963. The head of the CIA in the Middle East, James Critchfield, said, "We regarded it as a great victory."

HOW THE US AND BRITAIN BACKED SADDAM

Saddam Hussein first gained notoriety when he attempted to assassinate Qasim in 1959.

After the Ba'ath Party seized power from Qasim their national guard attacked working class areas and murdered thousands of communists and trade union militants.

Although the Ba'ath Party was booted out by its former allies in the military after just six months, it seized power again in 1968.

Western oil companies offered their cooperation to the new rulers.

The Ba'athist regime posed as anti-imperialist, but it did not champion the cause of the Palestinians. In 1970 King Hussein of Jordan launched his Black September assault on Palestinians in his country. There were 15,000 Iraqi troops in Jordan. They did nothing to help the Palestinians who were butchered.

The Iraqi regime courted support from both superpowers.

In the early 1970s the US relied on Israel, Saudi Arabia and the pro-Western

Shah of Iran as its principal allies in the Middle East. The Shah, with US backing, armed Kurdish rebels in Iraq, while putting down his own Kurdish population.

Iraq and Iran signed a treaty in 1975. Saddam Hussein put down the Kurdish insurgency without a murmur from the West, and consolidated power in 1978.

The US swung firmly behind him when the Shah was overthrown in 1979.

Saddam Hussein went to war with Iran in 1980, with Western support. The US was terrified by the Iranian Revolution. The bloody eight-year war saw Saddam use poison gas against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians. There was no outcry from Western governments.

At the end of the war John Kelly, the US assistant secretary of state, visited Baghdad to tell Saddam Hussein, "You are a force for moderation in the region, and the US wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq."

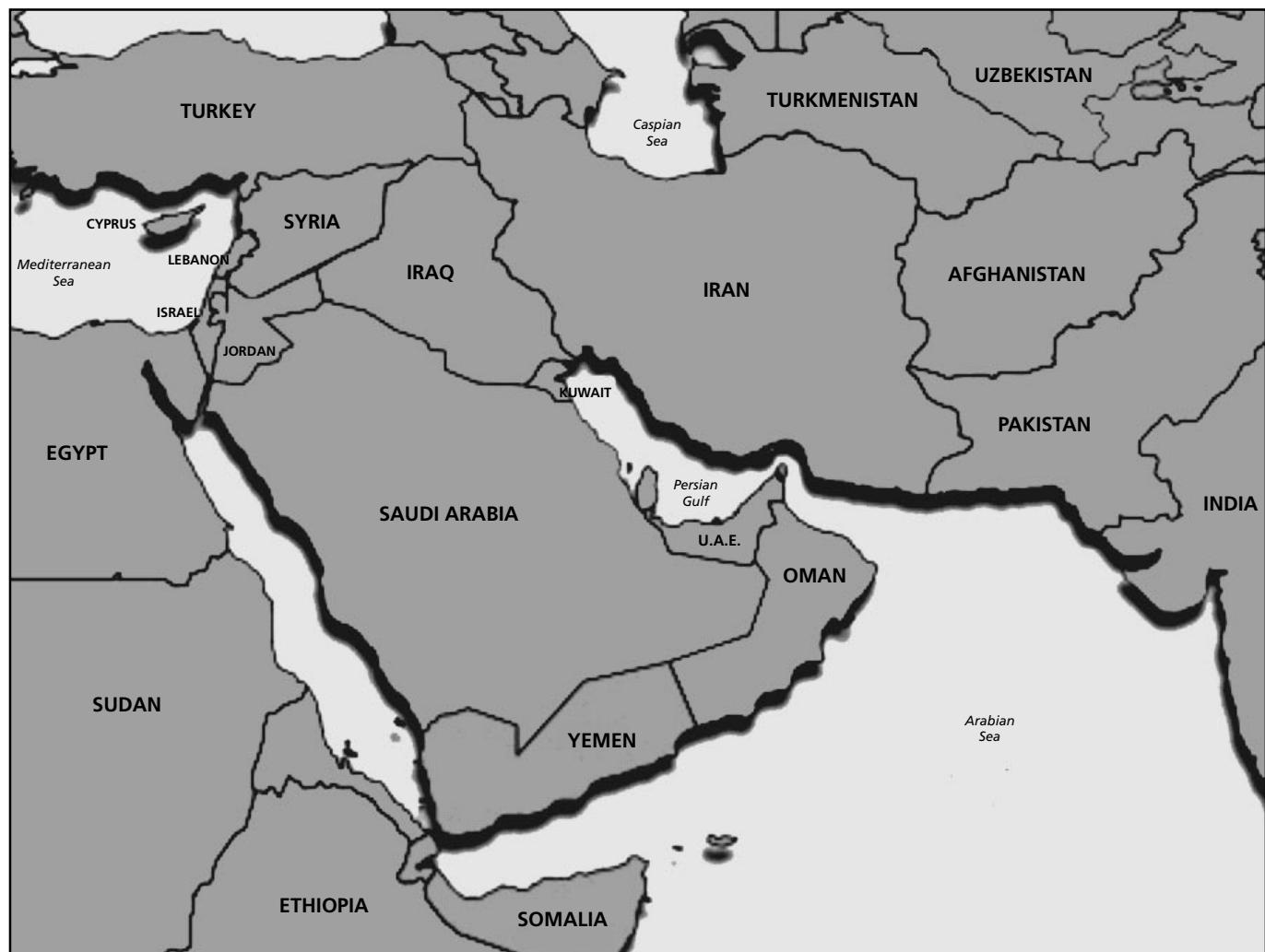
Saddam was so confident of support from the US that he believed he had its agreement to invade Kuwait in 1990.

But that risked upsetting Western interests in the Middle East. So the US turned against him.

The US and Britain have helped create every oppressive regime in Iraq and orchestrated the removal of the one government that had some popularity.

We should not let them interfere today.

Socialist Worker, Britain.



light on analysis: TV coverage of 9/11

By VAUGHAN GUNSON

"It's not the best time to be looking for analysis. This week's documentaries on the events of and after September 11, 2001, focus on victims, survivors and rescue personnel," wrote TV reviewer Fiona Rae in the *NZ Herald*.

And so it proved to be. The programmes screened, including a 90 minute *Sunday* special "Reel Life: 9/11"; *Documentary New Zealand* "Flight 93"; *Third Watch* "In Their Own Words"; the two part *A Tale of Two Towers*, and of course *Holmes*, tugged at the emotions or otherwise emphasised the dramatic.

The partial exception was Cameron Bennett's *Sunday* story on the prison camp at the US military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In this newly built facility 500 Afghans languish, without trial or evidence that they were anyway connected with the September 11 attacks.

But even this story did not delve too deeply, and was only mildly critical of the US.

Nowhere on TV did we see a one-hour special interview with Noam Chomsky, where he talked lucidly about September 11, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, oil and US imperialism.

Instead, we got harrowing stories from survivors of the Twin Towers collapse. And there were many examples of personal bravery by office workers and firefighters, along with tragic stories and images that were deeply moving.

Yet this is the level at which television bosses want to keep it.

The lack of analysis is the rule, not the exception. Rarely does television news coverage attempt to make connections between world events.

To start asking questions about why Saudi Arabian nationals hijacked American planes and crashed them into the World Trade Centre would lead to a whole series of questions about the world we live in.

Some of those answers might lead us to question the statements and actions of political leaders, and to question the entire system that serves the interests of an elite few.

Given television companies and newspaper conglomerates are owned by a few mega-wealthy media tycoons, who are very much part of that

elite, it is hardly surprising those questions aren't asked. Self-censorship flows down from the company boardrooms to producers, programmers and journalists.

If you are not motivated by a critical attitude to the world, and are accepting of the prevailing and 'natural' way of doing things, then you are not going to ask questions that might lead to radical conclusions.

Which is why the mainstream media generally reduces world events to isolated facts and sensationalist images. Things just happen, they may be horrifying, they might provoke anger, but that's just the way things are.

We are encouraged to identify with September 11 at an emotional level, but not to understand it.

And of course there's money to be made from covering iconic events like the terrorist attacks on New York.

Images of planes crashing into the Twin Towers are used to sell papers and attract viewers, which in turn sells advertising.

The race to pull viewers in the United States has extended to a bidding war over exclusive interviews with survivors. Prompting Don Hewitt, executive producer of CBS's *60 Minutes*, to say that "the competition is in poor taste".

From what I saw of the programmes themselves, two moments stood out.

One was from *A Tale of Two Towers*. A World Trade Centre office worker recounted how he had used iced-tea to wash dust from his eyes. He had bought the iced-tea near his home before he commuted to work, because he didn't earn a lot of money and it was cheaper than buying it in the city.

This small aside separated this worker from the bosses and managers interviewed.

For me, the reality of global class divisions briefly punctuated the coverage of September 11.

The other was of Cameron Bennett going up to a firefighter in New York dealing with a minor incident and asking the inane question: "How does it feel, being back here one year later?"

The firefighter told him to "fuck off".

A healthy attitude to take to media trying to cash-in on the events of September 11.



THE MAKING OF A LEGEND

Little Che

Written by PAOLO ROTONDO

Little Che tells the story of the famous Argentinian-Cuban revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara before he became a revolutionary, as he travels around South America with his friend Alberto.

Little Che is active theatre, performed in small venues. So the first thing that struck me was the difference between looking at people on a screen and having real people jumping around right in front of you.

Paolo Rotondo (Alberto) and Eryn Wilson (Ernesto or "Che") use lots of props and gestures, as well as shadow puppets and projected images to keep the show lively.

Their comedy routine banter could have been in any comic play, but it was funny nonetheless. The exception was the disappointing use of homophobic "jokes" throughout the play.

Wilson and Rotondo do a brilliant job of playing the minor characters. In one scene, the two of them hold a conversation with a third character. When Che is speaking Alberto becomes the other man, and when Alberto was speaking Che takes over.

The story is drawn from Che Guevara's book *Motorcycle Diaries*, about his travels through South America as a medical student. It shows Che as a fun-loving youth, but also indicates how his journey



CHE'S LATER LIFE

Ernesto "Che" Guevara was born in Argentina in 1928. After the period covered in the play *Little Che*, Guevara went to Mexico, where he met Fidel Castro and joined his band of Cuban revolutionaries.

They landed on the coast of Cuba in 1956, then spent the next two years in the mountains building a guerrilla campaign to overthrow the corrupt and repressive regime of the dictator Batista.

Guevara believed the revolution should be carried out by a small band of highly disciplined revolutionaries. He thought committed revolutionaries could make revolutions in any social conditions.

He was suspicious of urban workers. He thought the countryside would be ripe for revolution first, and then the revolutionaries would seize the towns from the outside.

Guevara's strategy seemed to be confirmed by the collapse of the Batista regime in 1959. The working class played very little part in the Cuban Revolution. Castro's group was tiny, numbering around 800 at the time of the revolution.

The guerrillas' fight did hasten the end of Batista's regime. But the main reason the regime collapsed was because no one was willing to defend it. The demoralised army stopped fighting. Crucially, the US withdrew its support.

Castro and Guevara marched into Cuba's capital, Havana, in January 1959. Cuba became a beacon for resistance to imperialism around the world.

Guevara increasingly found himself at odds with Castro and in 1965 he resigned his government posts and left Cuba.

He rightly saw the need to spread the revolution. But the years after Guevara left Cuba exposed the great weaknesses of his guerrilla strategy.

Leading a small group of Cuban guerrillas, Guevara tried to intervene first in the Congo, Africa, then in Bolivia, South America. In both he took little or no account of local conditions and politics and failed to win support from local peasants.

Guevara failure to build links with workers led to tragedy. Miners had led a revolution in Bolivia in 1952. There were miners' strikes, which were savagely repressed by the government, while Guevara was in Bolivia. But his group had no connection with this struggle.

After six months the Bolivian army captured his group in October 1967. Guevara was executed by a Bolivian general while a CIA agent looked on.

But they could not kill the spirit of revolt which Guevara stood for. He became a symbol of resistance across Latin America, the US and Europe.

If we want to overthrow capitalism Guevara's method of guerrilla war in the mountains has little to teach us. Small groups of rebels, however dedicated and brave, cannot defeat global capitalism.

We need a mass movement which brings together all those who hate the system with the organised working class, which has the strength to strike at the heart of capitalism. *Socialist Worker, Britain*.

changed him. The slogan on the play's poster "Wine, woman motorbikes and...socialism" sums this up well.

Near the end of the play, the pair are working a leper colony. Che decided that charity work, trying to care for the victims of the system isn't enough. He wants to get rid of the system that creates poverty, allows diseases like leprosy to thrive and then discards the sick.

In the second to last scene, the actors take some time to talk about what happens to Che in the future. The significance of Che's politics is summed up well: he was an internationalist who fought in many countries and became an inspiration to those who fight imperialism.

One thing at the play emphasised that this fight is far from over. Projected onto the wall of the passage leading to the theatre was a silhouette of the Bacardi rum logo. Presumably they are sponsoring the play. Bacardi try to cash in of the popular image of Cuba, but this US-based rum maker fled Cuba after the revolution and is a major financier of terrorist attacks on Cuba.

DAVID COLYER

The Auckland and Hamilton sessions are now over, but the play is running in Dunedin's Fortune Studio, October 4–12; Wellington's Bats Theatre, October 15–26; and Christchurch's Court Two, October 29–November 2. Tickets in Auckland were \$24 / \$20 concession.

US AND UK CREATE REFUGEE PROBLEM

George Mitchell's article on immigration in the August edition of *Socialist Worker*, overlooks the point of view that says, those nations who create the refugee problem in the first place must be made accountable for sorting it out.

While socialists argue over the plight of displaced people and how they should be treated by capitalists and their political followers, it clouds the only real issues which are the criminal activities of nations such as the US and the UK who create the problem and the inability of the UN to show the problem in its correct light.

Furthermore the view is held that in amongst the refugees who flow into a country are a number of petty capitalists who are the worst exploiters of all.

We are all boat people in this country and most of us came here under circumstances which allowed us to assimilate and make a meaningful contribution. Half of my ancestors came from Italy, but none of them cried into their vino on a Saturday night about the old country, neither did my French, English and Irish ancestors. We all became New Zealanders and some of us became communists.

My point is that we should be most critical of the factors that create refugees in the first place. Refugees are an outcome of crisis and shouldn't be confused or mixed up with immigrants, those who choose to move to another country and go through that country's immigration process.

At the end of the day, each nation designs an immigration policy that best suits its interests and its ability to assimilate those coming in, and middle class woevery about 'celebrating our differences' doesn't help this process either.

None of us can help our ethnicity, what we must do is concentrate on building institutions and processes that unite us and help us to work together for a just and democratic society of the peoples.

CLIVE MILLANTA
Porirua
[abridged]

Socialist Worker Monthly Review welcomes letters. Please keep them as short as possible.

Post: Box 13-685 Auckland
Fax: (09) 634 3936
E-mail: socialist-worker@pl.net

LOVE MUSIC: HATE WAR

Featuring: The Rock and Roll machine, SMD, Epawas, The Rabble.

Over one hundred people attended Socialist Worker's anti-war fund-raiser concert in Auckland on Friday the 13th of September.

This was our fourth political fund raising gig. We have held similar events in Auckland over campaigns like GE-free Aotearoa, funding for *Socialist Worker* newspaper and broad anti-capitalist themes.

Although we are getting used to higher numbers, the night was awesome.

Radical performers keen on supporting our anti-war message played great

sets and socialists took the mike in between acts to talk about the anti-war movement and Socialist Worker activities.

At the door we had petitions, leaflets, books and news papers and we held a raffle for an anti-war T-shirt all of which was appreciated by punters.

A memorable quote came from Matt from The Rock and Roll Machine — condemning the war, he said, "It's about killing, it's about oil, it's about money. It sure ain't about rock and roll."

Thanks heaps to all the bands and all the other people who helped out.

• KANE FORBES

LOVE MUSIC ★ HATE WAR

On Friday the 13th Sept, 9.30pm...

★ The Rock and Roll Machine ★

★ S M D ★ ★ Epawas ★

★ The Rabble ★

\$5

+ Anti-war Middle East solidarity speakers

... will be at the **Kings Arms Tavern**, so we can all tell George Bush and his mates....

Don't Attack
Freedom for Palestine

An attack on Iraq will kill thousands of innocent people, dominate a government's foreign policy and distract from important issues like global warming and poverty. An attack on Iraq will not bring about "regime change". But it will be the ordinary people of Iraq that pay the price. The anti-war movement is part of the broad and new movement and is already mobilising for a rally on 13th September to demand that no war or new wars should be waged. Come to the demo, hear and new speakers and help build a better world. For more info call 09 363 0001 or visit www.solidarity.org.nz

Broad Assembly of Socialist Worker

The Broad Assembly of Socialist Worker, held on August 17 and 18, was a very enjoyable event.

It brought together 30 members and supporters of Socialist Worker from around the North Island.

The most successful parts were where the Broad Assembly was like Socialist Worker's annual Socialism events.

We had hoped that the Broad Assem-

bly would go beyond the theoretical discussion of the Socialism conferences, and discuss how to build a bigger revolutionary current within the new left. In this respect the event missed the mark.

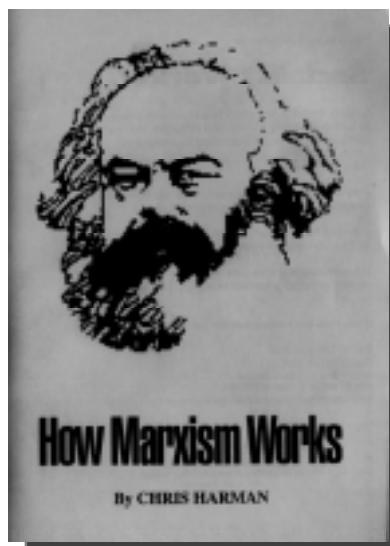
But we did learn a lot about the political questions being raised by anti-capitalists. These included: Can apathy be overcome? Is the working class still

relevant? Can small businesses be an alternative to the big corporations? How can we spread anti-war and anti-capitalist ideas?

These are the sorts of issues that Socialist Worker must address if we are to win over more of the growing minority who identify with anti-capitalism.

• DAVID COLYER

Socialist books



How Marxism Works

There is widespread myth that Marxism is both difficult and out of date. This is a myth put about by those who are the enemies of socialism, and endorsed by many academics.

In fact the basic ideas are remarkably simple and compelling. They explain, as no other set of ideas can, the society in which we live, its poverty in the midst of plenty, its coups d'état and military dictatorships, the way marvellous inventions consign millions to the

dole queues, and all the horrors that modern capitalism visits upon the majority of the world's population.

But Marxism is not just about explanation. It is a guide to how the world could be transformed by the majority in society, capitalism's gravediggers—the working class.

How Marxism Works is one of the most accessible introductions to the basic ideas of Marxism, written by leading British socialist, Chris Harman.

Send \$6 to PO Box 13-685 Auckland

CONTACT THE SOCIALISTS NEAR YOU

★ NORTHLAND

Phone: **Vaughan** (09) 433 8897
Email: vaughang@ihug.co.nz

★ AUCKLAND

Meets 7.30pm every Tuesday at the Trade Union Centre, 147 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn. Transport available.

Phone: **Len** 634 3984
Email: socialist-worker@pl.net

★ TAURANGA

Phone: **Tony** 544 1859
Email: hatosnell@hotmail.com

★ ROTORUA

Phone: **Bernie** 345 9853
Email: bernieh@clear.net.nz

★ NEW PLYMOUTH

Email: edithandal@pocketmail.com.au

★ WELLINGTON

Meets 7.30pm every Monday at Room 2, Crossways (back entrance), Elizabeth St, Mt Victoria.

Phone: **Gordon** 972 2296
Email: gfarris@i4free.co.nz

★ CHRISTCHURCH

Phone: **Don** 385 5268
Email: dwa@netaccess.co.nz

★ TIMARU

Phone: **Vaughan** 686 6498

★ NATIONAL OFFICE

Socialist Worker members elsewhere in Aotearoa and our sister organisations overseas can be contacted through Socialist Worker's national office.

Phone: **(09) 634 3984**
Fax: **(09) 634 3936**
Write: **PO Box 13-685 Auckland**
Email: **socialist-worker@pl.net**

Socialist Worker Monthly Review is on the internet

http://au.geocities.com/swo_nz/

Socialist Worker WHERE WE STAND



SOCIALISM

Capitalism is a system of exploitation which generates inequality, crisis and war. Although workers create society's wealth, it is controlled by the ruling class for its own selfish ends.

Socialism can only be built when the working class takes control of social wealth and democratically plans its production and distribution to meet human needs, not private profits. This will eliminate all class divisions in society.

Stalinist countries such as China and Cuba, just like the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, have nothing to do with socialism. They are state capitalist. We support the struggles of workers against every dictatorial stalinist ruling class.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORMISM

The present system cannot be reformed to end exploitation and oppression, contrary to what Alliance, Labour and union leaders claim. It must be overthrown by the working class.

Capitalism's parliament, army, police and judiciary protect the ruling class. These institutions cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

To pave the way to socialism the working class needs a new kind of state—a democratic workers state based on workers councils and workers militia.

INTERNATIONALISM

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is global.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We fight racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support all genuine national liberation struggles.

We are internationalists because socialism depends on spreading working class revolutions around the world.

LIBERATION FROM OPPRESSION

We fight for democratic rights. We oppose the oppression of women, Maori, Pacific Islanders, lesbians and gays.

All forms of oppression are used to divide the working class.

We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. Their liberation is essential to socialist revolution and impossible without it.

TINO RANGATIRATANGA

We support the struggle for Maori self determination.

The government's approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori.

Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state.

REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a mass revolutionary socialist party.

We are in the early stages of building such a party through involvement in the day-to-day struggles of workers and the oppressed.

The Socialist Workers Organisation must grow in size and influence to provide leadership in the struggle for working class self-emancipation.

We need to revitalise the unions with a rank-and-file movement.

If you like our ideas and want to fight for socialism, then join us.

Want to fight for a better world? Join Socialist Worker

- I want to attend a socialist meeting
- I want to join Socialist Worker

NAME..... PHONE.....

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Post to Socialist Worker, PO Box 13-685 Auckland

Imagine a world without war

By DAVID COLYER

The lyrics of John Lennon's much-loved song "Imagine" outline the kind of world many people would like to live in. But is it really possible to have a world without war and the other evils Lennon dreamt of ending? "No" is the most widely accepted answer. War, it is assumed, has always been with us, competitiveness and violence are supposedly innate parts of our "human nature". Yet, for most of our time on this planet, humans lived as "hunter-gathers" who had, as Lennon put it, "nothing to kill or die for".

In popular book, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, biologist and historian Jared Diamond uses the example of the Moriori, the indigenous people of the Chatham Islands, to demonstrate the links between technology, social organisation and war:

"While those ancestral Maori who first colonised the Chathams may have been farmers, Maori tropical crops [such as kumara] could not grow in the Chathams' cold climate, and the colonists had no alternative except to revert to being hunter-gatherers. Since as hunter-gatherers they did not produce the crop surpluses available for redistribution and storage, they could not support and feed non-hunting craft specialists, armies, bureaucrats, and chiefs... With no other accessible islands to colonise, the Moriori ... had to learn to get along with one another. They did so by renouncing war..."

Of course, the overall trend of human history has been in the other direction. Technology has improved, the surplus produced beyond the most basic needs has grown. The extra wealth has allowed some people to specialise in different kinds of work, but also allowed some to specialise in being rich and doing no useful work at all.

The most recent product of this process is capitalism. Over the last few hundred years, capitalism has drawn the whole world into its "global economy". More wealth is produced than ever before, but most of it is in the hands of the bosses and bureaucrats who control governments and corporations.

A good example is food production. According to Miguel Altieri of the University of California, Berkeley and Peter Rosset of Food First / Institute for Food and Development Policy:

"The world today produces more food per inhabitant than ever before. Enough food is available to provide 4.3 pounds [2 kilograms] for every person everyday: 2.5 pounds of grain, beans and nuts, about a pound of meat, milk and eggs and another of fruits and vegetables."

So why are people in poor countries still in danger of starving to death? And why do so many people in a rich country like Aotearoa have to rely on food banks?

IMAGINE

By JOHN LENNON

*Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
living for today*

*Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
living life in peace*

*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
In a brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
sharing all the world*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one*



"The real causes of hunger" say Altieri and Rosset, "are poverty, inequality and lack of access to food and land. Too many people are too poor to buy the food that is available (but often poorly distributed) or lack the land and resources to grow it themselves."

There is no better symbol of capitalism's obscene priorities than the push to make outer space part of the global battlefield. The US Space Command is the arm of the US military that plans for "full spectrum dominance" through "control of space". It's *Vision for 2020* report reminds us that:

"Historically, military forces have evolved to protect national interests and investments — both military and economic. During the rise of sea commerce, nations built navies to protect and enhance their commercial interests."

Looking at "future trends" the report predicts:

"Although unlikely to be challenged by a global peer competitor, the United States will continue to be challenged regionally. The globalisation of the world economy will also continue — with a widening be-

tween 'haves' and 'have-nots.'"

This is an issue for the military, because they protect governments and corporations the have-nots as well as from competitors. Since their formation during the wars against Maori, the New Zealand police and army have always been on hand to serve and protect New Zealand's ruling elite from the rebellious have-nots of this country. Some notable examples include their use against the Takaparawha (Bastion Point) occupiers, anti-Springbok tour protesters and against workers during the great strikes waves of 1890, 1913 and 1951.

The example of the hunter-gatherers shows that it is possible for humans to live in peaceful, cooperative society. The immense wealth produced by workers in capitalism's factories, offices, mines and fields means that — for the first time in history — it would be possible to build a cooperative society based on universal prosperity. But first we must remove the bosses and bureaucrats who monopolise the world's wealth. Such a radical change can only be achieved by an rebellion of the "have-nots".